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United States
Department of
Agriculture

**Forest Service**

Washington, DC

# Threatened, Endangered & Sensitive Species Recovery & Conservation

Action Plan
April 1990

"Every Species Counts"

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EXPERIMENT STATION

United States Department of Agriculture | Forest Service | Washington Office | 14th & Independence SW
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Washington, DC 20090-6090

**Reply to:** 2670 **Date:** OCT 24 1990

**Subject:** Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species Program -- "Every Species Counts" Action Plan

**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, and Area Director

Enclosed is our National action plan for the "Every Species Counts" program. This plan was developed to accelerate the recovery and conservation of Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive (TES) species that occur on National Forest System lands or are affected by Forest Service Research or State and Private Forestry programs. We are very pleased with the action plan and the way in which it complements the 1990 RPA Program. Congratulations go to Regional Forester David Jolly who led the TES Task Force responsible for the report that comprised the National action plan.

Now, we are asking you to give this program and your Regional action plan your personal attention. Current issues such as the red-cockaded woodpecker, spotted owl, and others, indicate a strong need to raise the profile and level of management given to the TES program. Regional action plans are due by December 1 per our letter of April 16, to allow sufficient time for a thoughtful response prepared in cooperation with their partners. Station Directors are currently reviewing a national assessment of our research on TES plants and animals, with their responses due back to the Forest Environment Research Staff by November 5.

Additional copies of the National action plan are being mailed directly to Washington, D.C. based conservation organizations, State Foresters, National Forests, and Ranger Districts. Station Directors are asked to send a copy of this plan to each Project Leader or Program Manager interested in TES research.

Please take the time to share this information with local publics and to make them a part of the "Every Species Counts" program.

F. DALE ROBERTSON
Chief

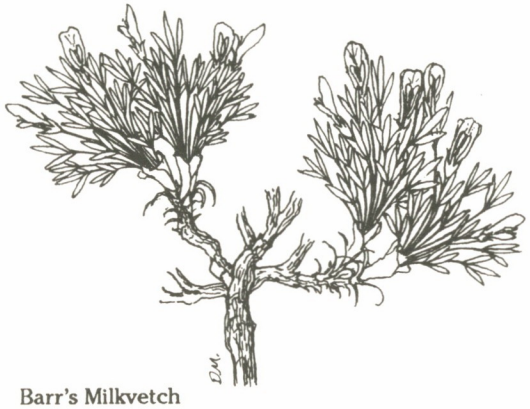
Enclosures

cc: Forest Supervisors
District Rangers

## PREFACE: Every Species Counts

***"The last word in ignorance is the man who says of an animal or plant: 'what good is it?' If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. If the biota, in the course of eons, has built something we like but do not understand, then who but a fool would discard seemingly useless parts? To keep every cog and wheel is the first precaution of intelligent tinkering."***

***— Aldo Leopold***



Barr's Milkvetch
*Astragalus barrii*

The recovery and conservation of Threatened, Endangered and Sensitive species is central to our mission of "Caring for the Land and Serving People." Forest Service managers and scientists hold the key to the recovery of many species and the conservation of their habitats. Our success depends upon our collaboration with Federal and State agencies, private organizations and individuals — all of whom are stakeholders and partners in the recovery and conservation of threatened, endangered and sensitive species. What follows is our vision and action plan to expand the contribution of the Forest Service to species recovery and conservation, in concert with our partners. What a meaningful legacy we can leave our children and their children as we strive to recognize that EVERY SPECIES COUNTS. Join with me to put action and meaning into this plan today!

F. Dale Robertson

F. DALE ROBERTSON
Chief

# INTRODUCTION

Recovery and conservation of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species are among the highest priority challenges to our natural resource stewardship. World-wide, we are witnessing an accelerating rate of plant and animal extinction—what some scientists have called "...the greatest extinction crisis in the history of the earth."

The greatest threat of extinction results from loss or alteration of natural habitats. National Forests and Grasslands are special lands of refuge recognized in both the Endangered Species Act and the National Forest Management Act. They are critical to the survival of plants and animals and the conservation of biotic diversity. We are making progress:

- In the Intermountain Region, the threatened Rydberg milkvetch, endemic to Utah, was delisted in 1989 as a result of timely inventory and monitoring efforts.

- In Puerto Rico, cooperative efforts between the Forest Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have increased both the wild and captive populations of the endangered Puerto Rican parrot.

- In the Southwest, recovery plan objectives have been met for downlisting the gila trout from endangered to threatened.

- In the Southeast, research and management designed and implemented habitat management programs which resulted in the first recorded population increase for the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

- The Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee reports healthy Grizzly Bear populations in both the Yellowstone and Northern Continental Divide (NW Montana) ecosystems as indicated by monitoring of Grizzly Bear reproduction and reduced bear mortalities.

- In the Midwest, virtually all known habitat for the endemic "slit-mouthed" snail (a sensitive species) has been protected through comprehensive forest planning.

In spite of these achievements, our efforts must now match the urgency of the task. Few species that occupy National Forests and Grasslands have been recovered to the point of downlisting or delisting. Yet, each year new organisms are added to the list of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Currently, nearly 600 species of plants and animals in the United States are classified as endangered or threatened (T&E) with extinction; about 30 percent are found on National Forest System land. Of the federally listed T&E species found on NFS lands, we have recovery plans for less than half. Research has conducted studies on fewer than 20 species, and approximately 90 percent of T&E research funding has been invested in four species. To effectively exercise our stewardship we must:

- Recognize the TES program as a management opportunity and not a management constraint.
- Recognize the TES program as central to our stewardship mission.
- Increase funding to broaden and accelerate our research and management activities.

Recent Forest Service TES activities have attracted national attention. Unfortunately, too much attention, both internally and externally, has focused on conflicts, confrontation, and the costs of TES conservation. Energies are being dissipated in litigation rather than being directed toward conservation. Our goal is to redirect those energies and establish the Forest Service in the forefront with a nationally recognized program for TES conservation.

Western Prairie Fringed Orchid
*Platanthera praeclara*

## The USDA Forest Service Vision for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species

This vision statement vividly describes a compelling, achievable, and desired future condition for the USDA Forest Service management of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. The target for attaining these conditions is the year 2000. With this statement, one may envision a desired future and compare it to present circumstances. With this view in mind, you can identify key actions necessary to fill the gaps which may appear. Such actions are the basis for developing strategies to assure urgently required investments of leadership, time, attention, money and other necessary resources.

## UPDATE: YEAR 2000

***Leadership and Commitment***

Beginning in 1990 and continuing throughout the decade, people at all levels of the Forest Service organization show clear evidence of employee ownership, incentives, and accountability in integrating threatened, endangered, and sensitive species goals and actions with other resource programs. Forest Service employees are frequently recognized and used as experts to help meet species management challenges at local, national, and international levels. We are partners with state foresters and private landowners, sharing information and our expertise to conserve and recover TES species. Leadership for and commitment to conserving species and their habitats are abundantly visible and applauded.

***Programs***

All Forest Service units, including State and Private Forestry, Research, and National Forest System, have aggressive programs aimed at recovering and protecting threatened, endangered, and sensitive species in full compliance with the Endangered Species Act. Clear, carefully communicated goals reflect a proactive, balanced program that addresses the conservation of biological diversity and the needs of entire biotic communities (plants, birds, mammals, fishes, reptiles and

amphibians). TES species recovery efforts are fully integrated with other Forest Service resource programs, as well as state and international programs, creating a balanced, multiple-use approach to management. Budgets and staffs have evolved to provide needed skills and resources that reflect management needs and priorities. Regions, Stations, and Areas coordinate their actions to ensure that management programs have a strong scientific foundation.

***Linkages***

The Forest Service now has sophisticated networks sharing vital and timely information, both internally and externally. Because of these networks, we enjoy a high level of trust and cooperation among stakeholders in threatened, endangered, and sensitive species management. Successful partnerships have continued and new ones are forged frequently to address specific management, recovery, and protection challenges. The Forest Service serves as both "leader" and "learner" among people/constituencies concerned about threatened, endangered, and sensitive species.

***Results***

Now in the year 2000, we celebrate with pride the many successes in recovery and protection of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. Successful recovery of species with more easily achieved recovery prospects has allowed us to focus greater attention on those species whose recovery is more complex, difficult, or expensive. Emphasis is now on managing species proactively rather than merely mitigating negative effects. We now have sophisticated monitoring systems that permit us to quickly adapt new strategies as needed. Success of the program is evidenced by a rapidly accelerating rate of delisting of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. The Forest Service is meeting its share of the recovery challenge for species for which the Forest Service shares responsibility with other resource managers. Last, but not least, we enjoy public trust and respect. This allows us to dedicate our professionalism to effective program administration in an organization where the conservation of threatened, endangered, and sensitive species flourishes.

## GOAL A: Leadership and Commitment

| ACTION | RESPONSE UNIT/PERSON | COMPLETION DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Encourage and develop awards/ recognition to acknowledge significant internal & external efforts to conserve and manage threatened, endangered, and sensitive species. | Chief/RF/Dirs | 1990 and continuing |
| 2. Develop and communicate a policy statement for agency-wide distribution featuring Chief's commitment to TES and the fit between TES and FS philosophy. Utilize TES success stories. | WO/Chief | Fall 1990 |
| 3. Implement a communications strategy to cultivate positive, consistent, and accurate media attention to TES issues and accomplishments. | WO & Region PAOs/Dirs | 1991 |
| 4. Provide learning opportunities for line officers and staff to improve their knowledge of TES species responsibilities. Include biological, legal, organizational and marketing aspects. | RF/SO/DR/WO + appropriate staff | 1991 and continuing |
| 5. Identify and utilize people who represent "centers of excellence" to serve as resources for accomplishing TES objectives. | WO/RF/Dirs | 1990 |
| 6. Design and utilize marketing research and materials to more effectively relay TES-related messages to internal and external audiences. | WO & Region PAOs/Dirs | 1993 |
| 7. Relay Forest Service commitment to TES conservation and recovery and extend assistance to state foresters and cooperators interested in private land management. | Chief/RF/Area Dirs | 1990 and continuing |

## GOAL B: Programs

| ACTION | RESPONSE UNIT/PERSON | COMPLETION DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Identify and prioritize TES species recovery/ management objectives. Coordinate Region and Station lists for priorities. | RF/Dirs/SO | 1990 and continuing |
| 2. Accelerate and expand research programs encompassing individual species requirements, the process of extinction, and population viability assessments. | FER | 1992 |
| 3. Incorporate TES recovery and management objectives in Forest plans and implement this schedule. | FS/RF | 1992 |
| 4. Seek the resources and secure the skills needed to meet recovery objectives for priority species. | RF/Dirs | Continuing |
| 5. Develop recovery plans in cooperation with the Fish and Wildlife Service and other cooperators. | RF/Dirs | Continuing |
| 6. Foster partnerships to coordinate management, recovery, and consultation. | RF/Dirs | Continuing |
| 7. Include TES action items in annual plan of work to ensure individual and programmatic accountability. | RF/FS | 1991 |
| 8. Develop a comprehensive field-oriented review system focused on TES activities on the ground. Include cooperators and partners on the review team. | RF/FS/Dirs | Continuing |
| 9. Acquire essential habitats needed for successful recovery efforts. | RF/FS/Dirs | 1990 and continuing |

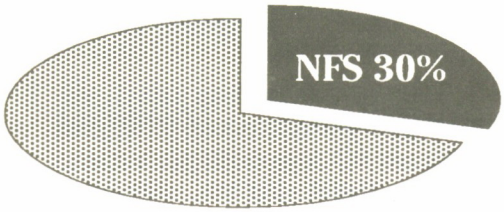
## GOAL C: Linkages

| ACTION | RESPONSE UNIT/PERSON | COMPLETION DATE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Forge internal and external partnerships that will result in the coordinated implementation and monitoring of recovery objectives and management programs. | RF/FS | 1991 and continuing |
| 2. Commensurate with ESA responsibility, assure that Forest Service/Fish & Wildlife Service cooperation and communications are effective and timely. | WO/RF/Dirs | Continuing |
| 3. Seek internal and inter-agency collaboration for sharing information and education programs, policy-making briefings and media communications. | RF/FS | Continuing |
| 4. Improve and utilize information management systems to report annual accomplishments toward recovery and expenditures in TES management and research. | WO/RF/Dirs | 1992 |
| 5. Implement technology transfer strategies for conveying research findings to Forest Service managers and cooperators in a timely fashion. | RF/Dirs/FER | 1991 |
| 6. Develop and utilize continuing education opportunities to build skills among staff. | WO/RF/Dirs | Continuing |
| 7. Foster international partnerships to promote TES conservation and exchange information and management strategies. | WO/RF | 1990 and continuing |

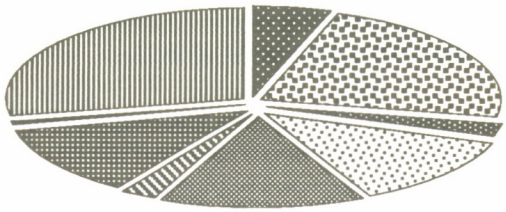
## APPENDIX A:

### Species Federally Listed as Endangered or Threatened

U. S. — 568 Species




NFS — 174 Species



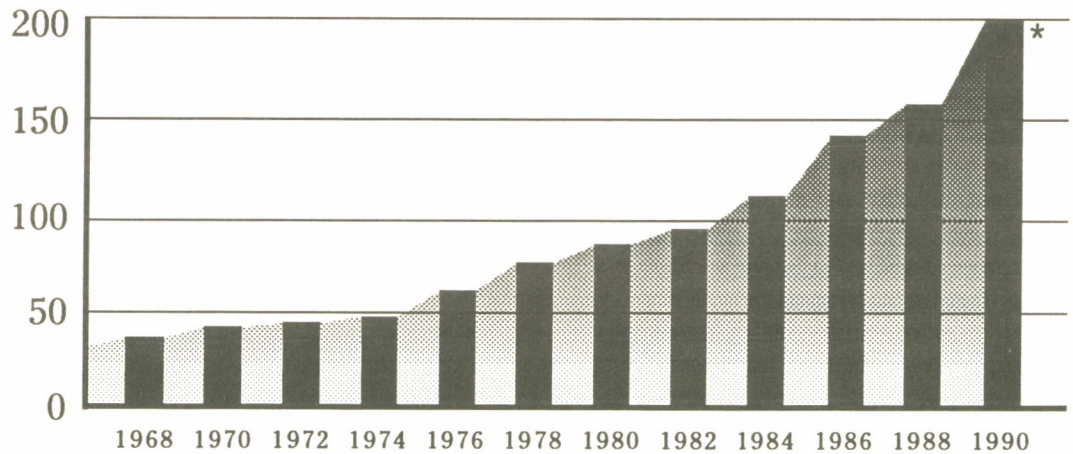
| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Reptiles | 9 | Insects | 4 |
| Fishes | 39 | Mammals | 21 |
| Snails | 4 | Crustaceans | 1 |
| Clams | 21 | Plants | 51 |
| Birds | 24 | | |

Source: USDA Forest Service 12/89

## APPENDIX B:

### Listed Threatened and Endangered Species on National Forest System Lands

Total Number of Species




* 1990 is estimated.

Source: USDA Forest Service 4/90

A fully invested program for Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive species is one which will 1) provide for recovery of all listed species on National Forest System land through accomplishment of our share of recovery tasks, and 2) prevent the need to list additional species through implementation of a proactive sensitive species program.

The 1990 Resource Planning Assessment (RPA) outlines an aggressive pursuit of recovery objectives for threatened and endangered species. It also includes objectives to be met in order to prevent the need for further listing of sensitive species. It states that newly listed species will be handled promptly. In the absence of formal Fish and Wildlife recovery plans, the Forest Service will pursue recovery through interim management strategies.

The long-term strategy in the 1990 RPA mirrors the Task Force's vision for the TES program. It also places full investment of the TES program within the larger program costs for Wildlife and Fisheries management.

Estimated below are the number of species for which recovery activities will be accomplished, and the amount of money required for this program for a specified year.

| Full Investment Program Year | Accomplishment of Our Share (Species) | Investment In $ (Millions) |
|---|---|---|
| 1989 | 16 | 17 |
| 1995 | 75 | 41 |
| 2000 | 121 | 80 |
| 2005 | 153 | 80 |
| 2040 | 202 | 40 |

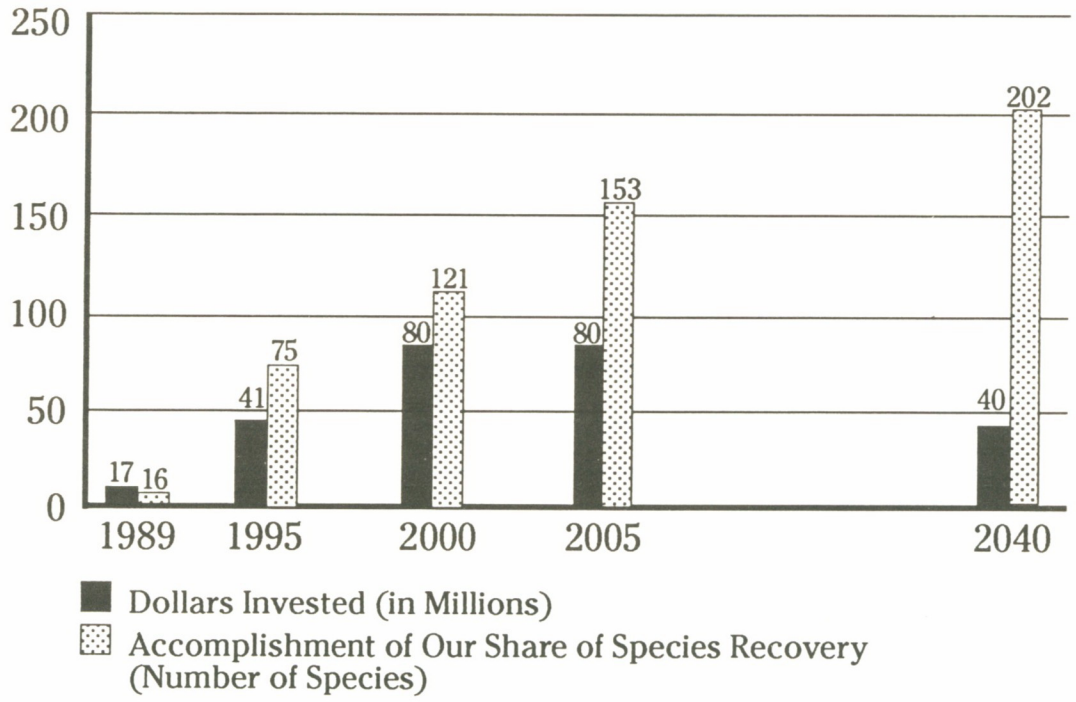
## Notes:

**Accomplishment of Our Share of Recovery Activities:** By 2040, recovery will be accomplished for about 90% of threatened and endangered species. Approximately 50 species will remain to be worked on, although these species are not the same ones over time. For some species, accomplishment will occur early in the planning period; for others, accomplishment will take longer; and throughout the planning period, a few additional species will be listed.

**Investment in $:** Investment requirements are based on field data for three regional programs, and include funding for a supportive research program.

*As compared to 1989, investment in TES recovery and conservation in 2000 will be nearly five times greater.* By 2040 with our pursuit of an aggressive sensitive species program, we will nearly eliminate listing of species that rely on National Forest System lands for the majority of their habitat. Program costs will decline in 2040 to approximately $40 million. Note that the costs of accomplishing recovery objectives and "delisting" species are substantially more than those required to manage for sensitive species. In addition, savings will be experienced as a result of litigation and appeals and increased management flexibility.

## TES Program in 1990 RPA




Source: USDA Forest Service 1990 RPA 12/89

## APPENDIX D: Background of TES Project

Threatened, endangered and sensitive species (TES) are among the most treasured resources of our nation's natural heritage. Our national forests and grasslands are home for many of these plants and animals. Since May 1988, the USDA Forest Service has been taking a critical look at how it can better meet its responsibilities and take advantage of opportunities to assure the survival of species entrusted to its care. An 18-member task force composed of representatives from the Forest Service, other agencies, and conservation organizations worked together to address a simple but fundamental question: How do you best create an environment within the Forest Service where a responsible and proactive TES program can flourish?

This group identified many issues relating to the Forest Service's responsibilities to recover and conserve TES species. Some of these issues related to the TES program's content and structure; others related to communication and marketing needs.

Continuing the work of this original task force, a communications analysis and strategy entitled "Raising the Profile" was prepared with the assistance of the Center for Environmental Study, a non-profit organization specializing in natural resource/environmental communications. The report was completed at the end of 1988. In early 1989, TES managers from all regions joined with representatives from other state, federal and conservation agencies and organizations to address the issues regarding the programmatic aspects of TES recovery and conservation. This group, meeting in Tucson, Arizona, further refined the issues and identified possible actions to help meet the challenges and opportunities in TES management.

The Tucson work provided the foundation for a TES Task Force led by Dave Jolly, Regional Forester for Region 3 (See appendix E for listing of TES Task Force members). Established in May of 1989, the TES task force team was charged with synthesizing the Tucson recommendations into a goal-oriented program to strengthen TES program management in the Forest Service.

Implementation of these recommendations has begun. By our actions, we position the Forest Service in a leadership role to effectively recover and conserve biotic diversity during the next decade.

## APPENDIX E: TES Task Force

David F. Jolly, *Task Force Leader*
*Regional Forester*
Southwestern Region
USDA Forest Service
Albuquerque, NM

William D. Zeedyk, *Director*
Wildlife and Fisheries
USDA Forest Service
Albuquerque, NM

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Southeastern Forest Experiment Station
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Doug Inkley
*Wildlife Resource Specialist*
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Deborah Meadows
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Missouri Department
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Robert Alvarado, *Facilitator*
*(District Biologist*)*
Santa Fe National Forest
USDA Forest Service
Albuquerque, NM

*Positions reflect assignments when Task Force was appointed.

USDA Forest Service

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